

Action Memo

DD/S&T-2313-63

10 DEC 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
SUBJECT: Information on SATURN Launching
REFERENCE: DCI Memorandum to DD/S&T, dated
6 December 1963

1. This is in response to your request of 6 December for information on the SATURN launching proposed for December. From our NASA contacts, we have been able to learn that a SATURN C-1 with a Douglass S-4 second stage, a nosecone, and 19,000 pounds of sand ballast will be fired this month. It will place 38,700 pounds in orbit, including the 19,000 pounds of sand. When the orbit decays, this material will be burned up or re-entered, depending on its size. The 19,000 pounds of sand will almost certainly burn up completely. However, there is approximately 2300 pounds of hard structure which will probably re-enter intact in thirty-two individual chunks. These are the pieces which will weigh between 100-150 pounds. The NASA people stated clearly to me that the interpretation of the one in fifty thousand number is as follows.

2. There is a chance in fifty thousand that one of these thirty-two heavy pieces will hit someone somewhere on the earth. They point out that one chance in one hundred thousand is the normal range of safety limits. However, I questioned whether this is based on a uniform distribution of the people all over the world or makes a presumption about where the re-entry will take place. The obvious point is the one you raised, to wit, if the re-entry occurs over Los Angeles, the odds are very much higher of having a fatality than if

NASA(s) review(s) completed.

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it occurs over Baja, California. The point of orbital re-entry is completely unknown at the time the firing takes place. Our contacts had no satisfactory explanation for this. Their uncertainty can be a reflection of the fact that they are not making the calculations and hence do not understand the criteria, or that NASA itself is slightly confused on the basic issue. I can pursue this further if you wish, but feel that this really is somewhat outside our jurisdiction in line of principal responsibility.



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ALBERT D. WHEELON
Deputy Director
(Science & Technology)

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